



Franklin's ground squirrel

Spermophilus franklinii

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Mammalia
Order: Rodentia
Family: Sciuridae

Features

Franklin's ground squirrel is 14 to 17 inches long, including a tail that is 4 1/2 to six inches. It has a large, olive-gray body with scattered black hairs. The head has gray hairs with white tips. The belly is cream-colored while the tail hairs are black and brown with white tips. The tail is barely more than one-half the length of the head and body combined. It has small rounded ears.

Natural History

Franklin's ground squirrel lives in areas with grasses that are short enough that it may see over them when standing upright on its hind legs – woodland-prairie edges, fence rows, and drainage ditches. These areas have grasses that are taller than those preferred by the thirteen-lined ground squirrel. It eats carrion, mammals, insects, birds, bird eggs, and plants. It may produce a whistle or chirp when disturbed. Its movements through grasses produce runways. When above ground, Franklin's ground squirrel may climb trees. It is diurnal, being most active in the middle of the day. Its burrow is dug underground and the entrance has some dirt piled around it. The burrow is located deep enough to have temperatures above freezing in winter and able to be drained quickly and not flooded. Mating occurs in May and young are

born in late May and June after a four-week gestation period. One litter of four to 11 young is produced annually. Young are helpless at birth. Their eyes open after about three weeks and they may leave the burrow after about one month. Franklin's ground squirrel may hibernate for about seven months each year.

Habitats

interior rivers and streams; wet prairies and fens

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.